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**Successful Branding for Nonprofit Animal Welfare Organizations**

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**Successful Branding for Nonprofit Animal Welfare Organizations**

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# **Successful Branding for Nonprofit Animal Welfare Organizations**

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This paper examines the marketing communication tactics necessary for a nonprofit animal welfare organization to conduct a successful branding campaign. Personal interviews, in-depth research, and visual demonstrations unveil the methods that are most effective for nonprofit organizations within this sector. Examples of ineffective branding and the resulting detrimental side effects are also explained. In contrast, a cohesive and consistently recognizable message in which a brand personality is evident increases the likelihood of long-term success. This research is meant to help current and future nonprofit animal welfare organizations develop an understanding of branding that will enhance their marketing communication efforts. In addition, this information can improve the welfare of the animals by helping to increase adoptions, volunteering, foster homes, donations/sponsorships and fundraisers.

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## **Successful Branding for Nonprofit Animal Welfare Organizations**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nonprofit organizations face an extremely difficult challenge when dealing with a social marketing strategy, especially in which the issue is a relative matter depending on different individual perceptions. An example of this can be seen through nonprofit animal shelters, rescues, and support groups. Due to the fact that individual preferences can vary depending on the mission of the nonprofit, the ultimate challenge is how to effectively reach the target market in a way that ultimately changes their long term behavior for the best. This proposes the research question addressed in this paper: what are the most effective marketing communication strategies necessary in order to successfully brand a nonprofit animal welfare organization?

I chose to research this avenue of study due to a sincere passion for animals and their well being. I wanted to utilize my background and expertise in advertising and combine my passion of animal welfare to gather research, investigate, and gain an insight into the communication tactics of those who have created nonprofit animal welfare organizations. My ultimate goal for this research is to find the most effective forms of communication and advertising mediums for nonprofit social marketing of animal organizations. Understanding this information can not only help further benefit current animal help groups with their advertising strategies, but inform my future plans of organizing and opening my own nonprofit animal welfare organization. It is my goal that with the information presented in this paper I will not only discover/identify the most



effective forms of advertising to help advance and promote current animal welfare organizations', but also gain insight to be able to launch my own nonprofit animal shelter/rescue organization.

Researching is important because the findings can help develop a more cohesive, stronger, strategic, and more effective means of communication for advertising these organizations and spreading their mission. Stronger advertising tactics and media will help the organizations empower their missions through successfully targeting the correct market and changing behavior through social marketing. This research will also help properly brand, successfully spread awareness, and maximize the results on the organizations main social marketing objective; to change/improve society's behavior for the benefit of all animals. The development of this strategic and cohesive message sets the framework for the organization to then build and expand into a long term successful message.

This area of study is also important as the findings can help the organizations create a differential advantage over other nonprofits in general and specifically over their direct competition of other nonprofit animal welfare organizations. Creating a differential advantage will give an organization a unique attribute that other competition does not possess. A differential advantage will also help increase the brand equity and belief/trust in the organization (Drumwright, 2009). This is an essential step to place the establishment ahead of other competition and leave the consumers with something memorable and help create a bond between the consumer and the organization.

The findings of this research will not only benefit current operating nonprofit animal welfare organizations, but also those which have yet to be established. These organizations will have the most benefit from the research in which they can target, market, advertise and promote from the beginning and bottom up. Unlike established organizations, there will be no need for rebranding or having to change current advertising tactics, which can lead to much confusion and possible setbacks. A clear, concise, strategic communication message that is understood before the organizations get off the ground, allows for a specific aim and direction that new volunteers, employees, and consumers can fully comprehend and trust.

In addition to helping the organizations, understanding the outcome of this research will benefit those volunteers and donors that participate within the animal welfare nonprofit sector. Further educating this group will allow them the opportunity to understanding the branding initiatives behind the organization they partake in. This allows these individuals to spread awareness of the organization on their own schedule through word of mouth and grassroot marketing initiatives. In addition, and most importantly, the findings of this research will give these organizations a branding guide, allowing them to become the model for other nonprofit animal welfare organizations.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The secondary data presented in this document was discovered through journals, articles, newspaper clippings, websites, primary, and books. Primary research on how to successfully launch a nonprofit animal welfare organization was also executed. There appears to be a void in the research in which there is very limited amount of information available specifically for this type of nonprofit. Due to the lack of research available on how to effectively communicate for a start up nonprofit animal welfare organization, it was necessary to go into the field to conduct primary research through personal interviews.

Ten in depth personal interviews, both over the phone and face to face when possible, were scheduled with communication directors/managers of animal welfare organizations in different communities and states across the country. The interview process consisted of a fourteen question in depth questionnaire in which the organizations' objectives (past and present), missions, target, advertising tactics and goals, etc. were examined. The goal of the interviews was to establish a basis of what has and has not worked in regards to communication tactics to society of animal welfare organizations. By interviewing people at different organizations from small and relatively new to very well established throughout the community and state, similarities and differences were identified. This allowed for an evaluation of the most and least successful approaches to communication.

This means of research also allowed for direct feedback along with a more personal and comfortable setting. In addition, one on one interviews present an opportunity for an less biased viewpoint in which the individual is not swayed by others feedback; such as in focus groups. A more detail oriented interaction between the interviewer and interviewee is another benefit of conducting a one on one interview.

The organizations that have been selected to interview were chosen based on multiple factors. Some are very well known throughout the community (both for the good and not so good. Some strictly focus on on-site brand awareness and adoption. The remaining organizations are not well known but continue to operate solely out of care and concern for the welfare of animals. Gaining insight allows for an array of diversified results and a comparison base to begin an evaluation of the forms of communication and social marketing tactics necessary to successfully brand a nonprofit animal welfare organization. The organizations discussed in this research will remain anonymous to minimize bias and allow interviewees the reassurance of confidentiality.

## **BACKGROUND ON NONPROFIT BRANDING**

In this section, the importance of branding for nonprofits will be discussed. In addition, the different avenues of branding will be interpreted to determine which are most successful for nonprofit animal welfare organizations.

To begin, the nonprofit sector (the group that encompasses all nonprofit organizations) must be clearly defined. The sector is a collection of organizations' and associations created to produce social value and formed by people with share beliefs and objectives (Grossman & Greckol-Herlich, 2009). Now that an understanding of what the nonprofit sector involves, the benefits and explanation of why branding for these organizations is essential can be discussed.

Branding is especially important for startup nonprofits to define their message strategy and make sure that everyone on the staff understands the organizations' elevator speech and can define what it stands for and believes in (Castle, 2009). If the staff can fully understand what the organization represents and can relay this information to the public, the organization has already reached a level of congruency from within (Castle, 2009). In addition to understanding the mission and beliefs, it is essential that this antecedent be expressed by word of mouth in the form of a truthful yet enlightening story that states what the organization stands for (Castle, 2009). It is essential to forget about those who are uninterested as their opinions will not be of any relevance (Castle, 2009).

Relevancy is another important issue that must be addressed within the communication tactics of a nonprofit. This subject can extend into many different

avenues. To begin, the communication goals and means of executing these goals must be relevant to the organizations and the individuals that participate in that organizations (Castle, 2009). Relevancy must also be created in which the cause of the organization is meaningful to the individuals that partake within that organization (Castle, 2009). This creates the communication between the organization, its members, and the target market smooth with an easily understandable mission.

Another avenue of relevancy involves the individuals within the organization. It is essential to mobilize the right people that are interested in the cause to help expand the brand awareness, mission and story of the organization (Castle, 2009). From here, employees and volunteers can do what they are best at and should be allowed to own that specific field of involvement.

Relevancy can, and should, also be thought of in terms of partnering. Finding a partner that allows for open communication effectively with parties understand the needs and goals of the other while sharing the same common benefit of their individual organization (Castle, 2009). If this is achieved, the partnership has greater potential for long term success. As James Austin explains in his article, *Timberland and Community Involvement*:

The organization you choose to partner with needs to have the same commitment to powerful notions and the same ability to deliver on these powerful notions as you do. If they are not at the same level, the equation falls apart and the relationship doesn't work (Austin, 2004, p.8).

A final avenue in which relevancy is important pertains to the media. By paying attention to current news through all forms of the media, a nonprofit is able to find a link between their organization and mission and news (Neff, 2009). Tying in current national news to the organizations cause cannot only create buzz for both parties, but gain awareness through a national advertising medium in which exposure of that nonprofit can greatly expand (Neff, 2009).

The discussion of branding, especially for nonprofit organizations, is one that can be interpreted in many different ways. Branding is not simply coming up with a clever logo or name. While advertising and marketing practitioners all have their individual twists on how to best explain branding, the underlining message, an effective and cohesive strategy encompassing all aspects of marketing, is common through all perceptions. A glance at the different twists on branding, all with the same underlining meaning, can be seen below.

As described by James B. Twitchell in *Branded Nation*, “Branding...is the application of a story to a product or a service and is utilized whenever there is a surplus of interchangeable goods” (Twitchell, 2004, p. 4). Similarly, Nancy E. Schwartz, author of “*What is Branding? A Tutorial for Nonprofit Organizations*,” states that “branding is the art of creating a consistent, recognizable, and clear unified voice or personality that conveys the specific organization’s uniqueness, focus, and values” (Schwartz, 2009, pg. 1). Another explanation comes from Rosser Reeves, an advertising genius and retired advertising agency employee, declared that branding is creating a USP (Unique Selling

Proposition) and expressed through a story (Twitchell, 2004, p. 101). Douglas B. Holt, author of “*Brands and Branding*,” believes that branding has become one of the most important and most misunderstood aspects of business today (Holt, 2002, p. 1). Holt continues by explaining that how an organization decides to go about the branding process may be as unique as the organization itself. Holt provides a very clear explanation of what branding both is, and is not, through the following:

- Branding is a strategic point of view, not a select set of activities.
- Branding is central to creating customer value, not just image.
- Branding is a key tool for creating and maintaining competitive advantage.
- Brands are cultures that circulate in society as conventional stories.
- Effective brand strategies must address the four components of brand value; reputation value, relationship value, experiential value, and symbolic value.
- Brand strategies must be “engineered” into the marketing mix.

Understanding the previous explanations about what a brand is and does will set a basic framework for organizations. This framework can be used to follow, maintain, and help achieve the greatest branding experience for individual organizations.

Although the branding experience may be unique, there are certain characteristics, in addition to the framework previously mentioned, that are necessary in order to achieve a solid and cohesive brand. First, the brand must be authentic in which it tells a story that



differentiates the organization and makes the consumer feel that the brand is an experience. This story should encompass both an emotional and rational viewpoint for the consumers (Schwartz, 2009). A brand should be clear and consistent through all communication strategies in which all build on the essence of the brand's mission (Schwartz, 2009). Overall, a brand is seen as the personality of the organization (Schwartz, 2009). It is essential that this personality should easily identify what the organization stands for. If this is not clearly demonstrated, the organization has not successfully created a sound brand or brand personality.

### **Understanding the Consumer**

In order to effectively brand a nonprofit animal welfare organization, it is essential to understand the target market in which the communication strategies will be directed towards. The most effective means of research would be to conduct qualitative research. Based from a collection of previous educational knowledge within the advertising field, the following are examples of questions that should be asked of the target consumer:

- What type of communication message is the most appealing to you?
- What is it about this type of message that catches your attention?
- In your opinion, what type of advertising is the most attention grabbing?
- Which forms of advertising do you utilize the most?
- What would make an individual respond to an organization?

- Are you involved with social networking? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Listening to and understanding the consumers are essential *before* any implementation of branding takes place. In addition to understanding and listening to the consumers, the organization must know who represents the community (the keymaster) in which they are involved and who is able to unlock different avenues of communication and partnerships through networking (Neff, 2009). Utilizing the above tools will help brand an organization with sound strategies (Schwartz, 2009).

### **Branding Process**

Not having a solidly branded organization, a nonprofit is simply just another one of the 1,300,000 nonprofits currently existing. Successful branding, accomplished by understanding the organizations' and consumers' needs, expectations, and current positions, is an essential component to any nonprofit organization that wishes to increase its awareness. Branding will help create a unique position and differential advantage for the organization, increase the brand equity and awareness within the target area, and assure consumers of a great sense of quality and consistency within its communication and mission objectives (Twitchell, 2009). As learned from past advertising studies, when considering how to effectively brand an organization, specifically a nonprofit, it is necessary to first answer a few key questions to set the foundation of an effective brand. These questions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What does the organization stand for?

- Does the organization have a clear and concise mission statement?
- Is it understood by the public?
- Who is the ideal consumer and target?
- What are the 4 P's (product, price, place, promotion) of the organization?
- What is the organization's differential advantage?
- How can this antecedent be used to position against competitors?
- Does the organization have a consistent logo that is applicable to all pieces of communication?

After gathering a full understanding for what branding is, there are four basic steps that should be followed to actually design the brand strategy. These steps, as indicated by Holt (2009) in "*Brands and Branding*," include the following:

- Step 1: Identify goals that branding can address and are attainable (think long term).
- Step 2: Map the existing brand culture through its story (reputation, relationship, experience, and symbolism it may hold)
- Step 3: Analyze competition and environment to identify branding opportunities through SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) research.
- Step 4: Design and implement the strategy through a strategy

Without a basis for understanding the organization, its consumers, and its goal, the branding process will not only be unorganized but ineffective. It is necessary to first answer the previously listed questions not only to benefit the organization, but the potential consumers as well. Answering these questions sets a solid foundation for its organization to develop its communication efforts and tactics. After this foundation has been achieved, the branding of the organization through which it finds the best way to distinguish a brand and stand out amongst other organizations offering the same products and services can begin.

## **FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS**

To achieve a better understanding of the past, current, and future opportunities and tactics for branding within nonprofit animal welfare organizations, one-on-one interviews were conducted. For those out of state, phone interviews were necessary. Through this research method, an array of trends and concerns were evident. Qualitative data was analyzed to unveil the most effective forms of communication to brand a nonprofit animal welfare organization successfully. The research will begin by talking about major trends and concerns within branding for this nonprofit sector. Examples of successfully branded organizations, along with those lacking major pieces, will be analyzed. A discussion section will follow in which individual interpretation will be explained and rationalized. To keep the organization names anonymous, the city in which it is located and whether the organization is a general welfare, shelter, or rescue, will only be mentioned in this documentation.

## **Trends and Concerns**

Throughout this collection and interpretation of the research executed, many trends amongst the different animal welfare organizations have been unveiled. Some trends are the start of what could end up being a successful form of communication amongst all groups, while others have the potential to be detrimental to the long term success of the organizations. An analysis of the current trends and concerns is explained in the following discussion.

### *No Target/too broad*

The first trend, and one of the most problematic from a communications standpoint, is the lack of a target audience. The majority of organizations simply mentioned they wanted to seek all animal lovers to help in whatever ways they can. While in theory this sounds great, this is not only too broad of a description, but not at all specific. The communications director from a large, well known, southern organization mentioned, “We don’t have a specific target as almost everyone can help, from animal lovers to those who hate animals through our feral cat spay and neuter program.” It may be easy to believe that any animal lover would be a target and willing to help, but there are specific groups of individuals within this category that would be more prone to volunteer, adopt, donate, and sponsor the organization if correctly marketed and communicated effectively.

Unfortunately, there is more than just one organization suffering from this dilemma. An Austin based rescue group confronts the same issue. During a sit down, one-on-one interview with the owner of the organization, when asked if they have a specific target and if so, who is it, she replied with the following, “Not really...just anyone that wants or can help rescue dogs in need of better overall welfare,” (Lewis, 2009). The uncertainty in the target gives no guidance for how to properly direct any communication tactics. Because of this, it is no surprise this organization has not seen much success in terms of unaided brand awareness; which is respondent's recall of a brand name, commercial, etc. without any cues or prompts from the interviewer (Marketing Research Association, 2009).

As I have learned from my advertising studies, an organization cannot be all things to all people, or else it becomes nothing to everyone. It is understandable that animal welfare organizations seek any help they can acquire, but if a target market/audience is not selected and then implemented within the communications practices, the organizations run the risk of losing their focus and will be confronted with a challenge of who to direct messages to before every campaign. Having all organization employees remember, practice, and also enforce the understood target market/audience will help assure an easier communications flow within the organization as well as in marketing and advertising to the public. After detailed research and a careful analysis of understanding ones target marketing, directing aim at this group will not only be easier and more effective, but ultimately more successful.

### *Model Organizations*

All animal welfare organizations studied mentioned a specific animal welfare organization or city with regulations on animal welfare that they wished to follow in similar footsteps through achieving a no kill status. An interviewee in Austin, Texas, mentioned his organization looks up other successful nonprofit animal welfare organizations including Texas SPCA, American Humane, and ASPCA because of their internet and email marketing strategies. This shelter looks up to not only other nonprofit animal welfare organizations, but to model cities such as Richmond, San Francisco, Ithaca, and Reno. These are model cities for many animal welfare organizations as the ASPCA mentioned the shelters within the cities have all achieved a “no kill status” in 2009. Similarly, an animal welfare organization in San Antonio, Texas, is striving to be more like Austin in regards to achieving a no kill status for their city. As setting goals and means to achieve these goals are important, it is enlightening to witness initiative being taken to improve and advance an organization to the best of the organizations’ ability.

During a personal interview with an animal welfare group based in Austin, Texas, the communications director mentioned that the organization looks up to successful operating for-profit veterinary clinics. The goal of this is discover what is successfully being executed and how those communication tactics can be mimicked. The communications director realizes that reaching the same level of marketing and advertising that the for profit vet clinics has achieved may be more challenging due to

financial reasons, but the organization is continually striving to reach up and out to follow the footsteps of an already successful company in terms of communication and strategy implications.

### *Successfully Branded Model Organization Campaigns*

An example of a nonprofit animal welfare organization that has created a successfully branded campaign initiative, and an organization that others look up to, is the ASPCA, located in New York, New York. In 2007, the ASPCA created a three year partnership campaign entitled ASPCA: Mission Orange. As the organization explains, the mission is “a focused and measurable effort to create a country of humane communities, one community at a time” (ASPCA 2007). ASPCA selected target communities to pursue the three year partnership, including Austin, TX; Charleston, South Carolina; Gulfport-Biloxi, Mississippi; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Spokane, Washington and Tampa, Florida. Within these targets, several different types of animal welfare organizations and leaders have been grouped together to initiate change for animals; specifically those most at risk: the shelter population (ASPCA, 2009). This program has been successfully branded through a simple mission statement, guiding principles, a selective target, qualitative and quantitative research, common goal between partnerships, effective storytelling and finally, consistent use of a logo and color. In the following statement, the ASPCA explains through their 2007 marketing materials the rationale behind the selected color orange:



Orange is identified with vibrancy and energy, and it is our hope that by associating the combined efforts of the ASPCA and its partners with this color, the public will begin to identify orange with the welfare of animals all across the country. This will enable them to become strong animal advocates by “going orange for animals” and inspiring their communities to do so as well. Our hope is that one day the color orange will be synonymous with animal welfare everywhere!

The previous statement demonstrates that the organization has effectively articulated the rationale behind the color orange, what it means for the groups supported through the program, and how it can eventually be an easily identifiable recognition and association to the public that orange involves the welfare of animals.

In addition to the research and rationale behind branding the program with the color orange, the program also specifies three straight forward guiding principles. These principles, also listed within the 2007 marketing materials, are as follows:

- Focusing efforts on saving shelter animals as they are most at risk for euthanasia
- Ensuring that efforts in each community are inclusive, with all leading community agencies and organizations collaborating, regardless of their personal philosophies
- Aiming to make the efforts in these communities measureable and sustainable

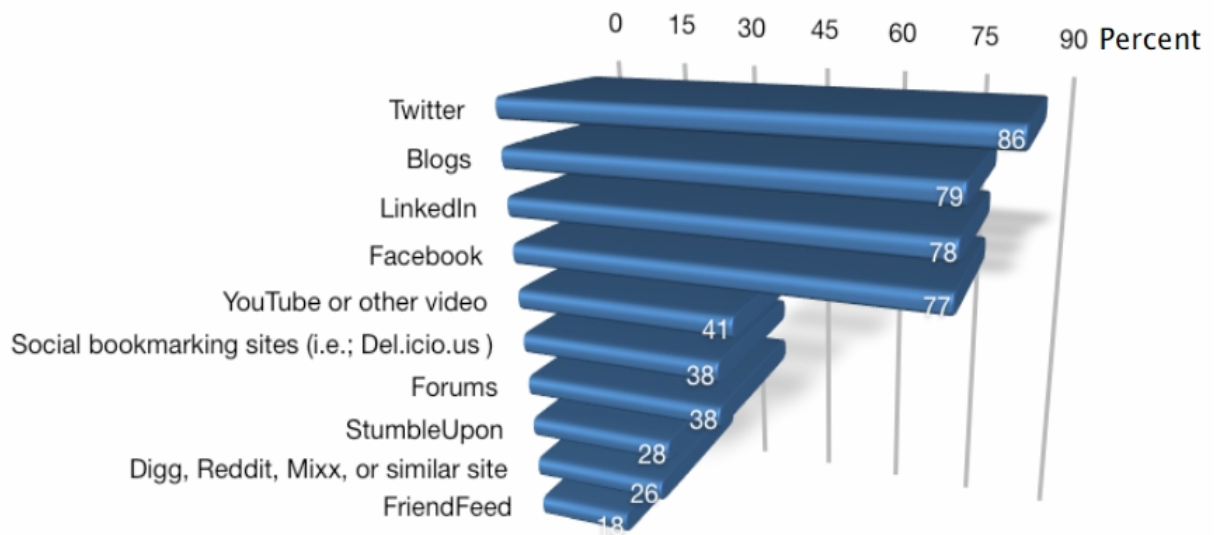
The preceding principles are an example of an organization that has successfully understood how to focus an initiative, develop sound strategies, and think long term success through measurable and sustainable goals.

### *Involvement in Social Media*

Another trend amongst nonprofit animal welfare organizations involves the recognition and involvement of the rapidly expanding social media form of communication. Although not all organization interviewed declared they are active within social media, they all did realize the significance and possibilities available. Between those organizations currently not involved but understand the importance, and those actively participating, is a large gap. This gap includes those organizations which feel that a presence is necessary, but unsure of how to successfully utilize that presence.

As demonstrated in the charts below, social media is becoming the new form of marketing and advertising used to help promote, educate, and build brand awareness for organizations. If utilized correctly, it can hold much success for nonprofit organizations since it is a free service that offers endless possibilities. The following chart demonstrates how many users are actively involved in social networking sites thus far in 2009. The chart below (Figure 1) also lists which forms for social networking are used most frequently.

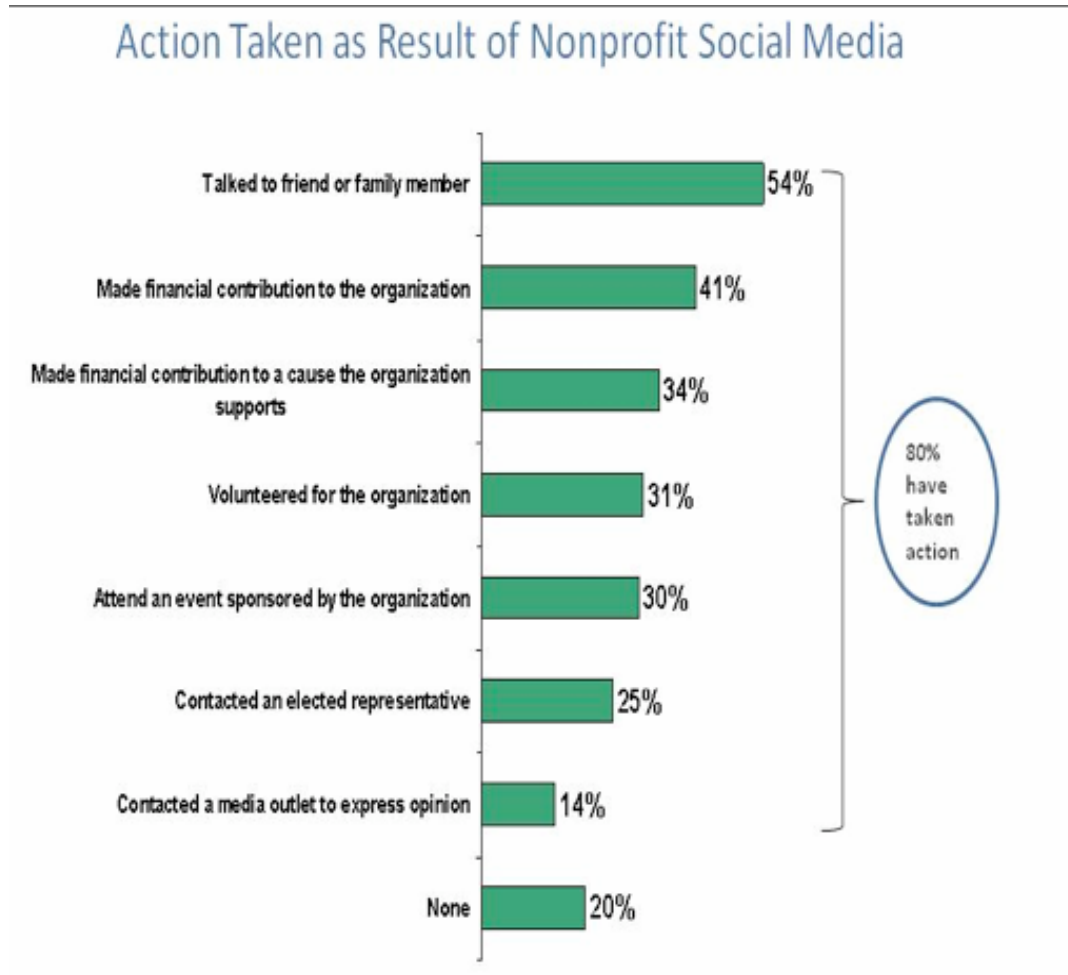
## Commonly used social media tools



Source: Social Media Marketing Industry Report © 2009 Michael A. Stelzner

Although the preceding chart is not specific to nonprofit organizations, a visual representation of the number of social media avenues, and the percentage of individuals participating in these tools, are demonstrated. This allows a selection of which forms of social media are the best fit for its long term branding success. In addition, a measure of how effective these forms of communications can be determined by measuring how many individuals have taken action based on information from a social media site. The chart below (Figure 2) demonstrates how powerful social networking can be if effectively

utilized for nonprofit organizations today.



In regards to social networking for nonprofit organizations, an online nonprofit social networking survey (Nonprofits Embracing Social Media) conducted in March of 2009, 929 respondents representing nonprofits of all sizes indicated that nearly three-quarters (74.2%) have a presence on Facebook, and 30.9% have one or more social networking communities on their own web.

The communications director from one Austin, Texas, based organization explains, “We are on Facebook and Twitter, although the primary focus at this point is Facebook.” He continues, “Not only do we have a Facebook page for our organization, we also have a fan page where we now have over 1,200 fans.” Although the fan page is great for increasing awareness and letting the community talk about the love and benefits of the organization, the communications director mentioned there has been no positive correlation between number of fans and donations received.

This organization’s main Facebook page has a specific section that allows for donations to be given through an external link. In addition, awareness of upcoming events, pictures, success stories, recent campaign photo albums, an easily identifiable mission statement, and link to the website are all available. The use of social networking sites for this organization is to gain awareness of the nonprofit’s website. As the communications director expressed, “We always want to direct people back to our website....that is always the goal.” Thus, it is apparent that this organization is utilizing Facebook as a communication tool to reach those who otherwise may not be as easily accessible through other forms of marketing. Once the target has been reached, it is the hopes of the organization that the visitors will click on the link which directs attention to the nonprofit’s website where more details on information and donation possibilities are listed.

Another organization involved with social networking via Facebook is a rescue group based in Austin, Texas. This group functions with the sole purpose to end the

needless killing of man's best friend. To help spread this mission and awareness, the organization is highly active on new and evolving social networking sites. The networking page the organization has spent the most time creating and maintaining is Facebook.

This account is set up under a section entitled, “Causes on Facebook.” The branch of this site operates solely for cause related events in the hope of increasing donations and funding. Here, individuals can donate any amount of money to the organization. The individual may also choose to have their profile picture appear next to their donation amount. The site also shows a breakdown of how many members are parts of the organization and of those members, how many have donated. Any “member” of the cause is able to view other members’ activity, which includes referrals, donations, and money contributed. This type of categorization makes for an easily identifiable measurement of success and total contributions to individual organizations.

Causes for Facebook also allows for graphs to be created under what is titled, “At a Glance.” Events that the organization has put on in the past are shown on the side along with the amount donated on a point scale graph. This allows the viewer, and organization, to easily identify which events were the most successful in terms of monetary contributions and which events generated the most awareness as in numbers of “fans” that supported the specific cause.

### *Concerns with Social Media*

Although social networking can be beneficial to an organization, simply creating a social networking account for a nonprofit organization is not as easy as one may think. The same organization that had been so successful on Facebook had a dilemma when it came to Twitter. During the time of interview with the communications director, while the organization's Facebook involvement was consistent their Twitter account had been inactive for over 30 days. When asked why the difference in activity between the two sites, the communications manager explained they have yet to successfully launch their account because their organizations name exceeds the number of characters allowed.

Not only was the number of characters too long, but simply shortening the name to an abbreviation was not acceptable by the founder and owner of the organization. The founder/owner was afraid that by shortening the number of characters and using an abbreviation, the organization would be confused with another local nonprofit animal welfare organization.

While it may seem this organization is behind the trend on one of the latest social networking sites, the communications director, with a background in Marketing, understands the consequences of exposing the organization too soon as it could possibly be more detrimental to the brand by not having a consistent and easily identifiable abbreviation. Instead of coming up with a quick and easy abbreviation to simply become a part of the social media site, the communications manager is waiting until a successful name/abbreviation is decided that resonates with the organization and its target consumers.

Simply being “a part” of a social networking service will not take an organization to the next level (Schwartz, 2009). As one organization in Austin, Texas, mentioned, “We are on Facebook, but I honestly do not remember the last time I checked it or updated it...I should probably do that soon.” This statement expresses the lack of knowledge on the effectiveness that social media can bring to nonprofit organizations.

Another rescue group in Austin, Texas, has also taken the initiative and hopped onto the social networking bandwagon. Similarly, this organization is not active. The organization is involved in social media as they partake in sites such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Although they are experiencing and taking part in the new media, they admitted to not have a solid strategy. This is a very large opportunity that should be capitalized on seeing that 80% percent of Americans are now using social networking sites (McCollum, 2009). The organization did mention that through all of their communication tactics, they would like to develop and maintain prosperous relationships in the community.

Not only are the organizations not regularly maintaining their individual sites, but some even acknowledged that they do not have any specific goal for this form of growing social media communication. As a large organization in Austin, Texas expressed, “We are on Facebook and Twitter, but do not really have an objective for it,” (Lewis, 2009). The manager continued with, “...at least we are on it...that’s the first step!”

Utilizing social networking sites but failing to remain active is not only a loss of potential greater awareness amongst consumers, but can also be a potential downfall for



the organization itself. Due to the fact that the use of social networking sites are becoming continually more popular, when consumers are searching animal welfare organizations through a social networking tool such as Facebook and Twitter, they enjoy seeing updates, news, photos, events, etc.; information that would normally be shown on the organizations website. The lack of maintaining up to date information may send messages to the consumer that the organization may be old fashioned and uninformed, possibly turning away potential donors and sponsors. This should be a big concern for any organization, but especially in the nonprofit sector, due to the ease of use and low cost associated with utilizing social networking capabilities.

A social media strategist/consultant and experienced community organizer, Debra Askanase, is also a non-profit executive and business consultant. Askanase manages a website entitled *communityorganizer2.0* which helps companies and nonprofits get the most out of their social networking opportunities. Recently, Askanase wrote an article entitled “*Don’t start what you can’t maintain.*” This article justifies what was previously mentioned: being a part of a social networking site is not enough, but is necessary to maintain active in the initiatives (Askanase, 2009).

In this November 2009 article, Askanase mentions the following:

Social media is an engagement strategy in which you want to create online ties that engage, create relationships, and move people to act on behalf of a cause, company, or organization. After you spend all that time creating those relationships, you have to commit to maintaining them (Askanase, 2009).

Askanase mentions that if the organization's social sites are not tended to with care, it runs the risk of damaging both its online and offline credibility. The following are three repercussions of not tending to your online presence in the social networking environment:

- People stop caring
- People stop spreading your news
- Loss of organizations friendship credibility

While social networking is an extremely fast growing form of marketing communication, simply owning a name and space on a site is not enough. Organizations must be socially active and continually pursuing new prospects in the forms of donors, sponsors, and clients through this means of communication. It is essential for these organizations to research the benefits of this form of continually evolving and low cost social marketing that can generate simplified brand awareness if executed in a proper way.

#### *Traditional Media Usage: TV, Radio, Print*

As represented above, the shift to new media is a significant trend demonstrated in almost every organization across the country interviewed for this report. Although

many more organizations are now utilizing this new media, no cutback is evident on traditional media usage. Examples of this can be seen through different shelters across the United States. A shelter in Austin, Texas, mentioned that although they have attempted to execute communication strategies through many different advertising mediums, internet (website) and TV related campaigns have been the most successful with awareness and call to action. The shelter noticed a direct correlation between TV advertisement placement and the number of donations. Immediately following the TV advertisement (regardless of the tone or story being told about the organization), the number of individual donors and money donated increased. After the campaign had finished, the donations slowed back down.

Traditional forms of advertising media for this organization have been implemented in a few very successful campaigns. The most effective campaign arose out of an emergency situation in the summer of 2007 in which the air conditioner broke leaving the shelter in desperate need to make sure the animals were still healthy and protected. A fundraising event took place in which \$200,000 were raised in only three weeks. Media such as television, radio, internet, and press releases all ran the story asking for donations to help keep the animals safe in an uncomfortable and fragile state. Following the campaign and after the shelter had been repaired, the organization honored those within the community who supported and donated during a time of need. The local newspaper ran a story in which the community party was mentioned to inform the residents that the organization was hosting a thank you event. Although sometimes

unfortunate, the director of marketing at this local shelter mentioned, “Sometimes it’s the bad news that’s the most effective.”

Through interviews and research on different types of nonprofit animal welfare organizations across the country, it is evident that society is more empathetic towards nonprofits in times of need than routine fundraising efforts. While unfortunate that it may take a negative situation to bring out a positive reaction, there is something to be said for what evolves from the immense and helpful response. If this type of response is the product of a negative situation with successfully marketing and communication strategies, what type of response could be the product of a positive situation with successful marketing and communication tactics?

This previous scenario demonstrates how sometimes an organization’s leader may believe they have everything to create a successful advertising campaign when in reality, it flops. An example of this can be seen through a humane society based in Austin, Texas. Employees and volunteers of the organization came up with a TV ad campaign that ran during the summer Olympics of 2008. The goal of the TV spot was to inform viewers of the local “Olympet games” that would be taking place at the organization’s location. During these games, the animals would partake in such events as the hotdog high dive, people chase, and other pet activities that mimicked that of the real Olympic events. Although the campaign was executed by the employees and volunteers at the shelter, not an advertising agency or any communication professionals, they believed it to be a very clever, creative, and a well thought out event that was sure to gain attention.

Ironically, the campaign ended up receiving no hits. “Zero,” as the communications director reiterated. While traditional media can be effective, research, strategies, understanding the consumer, and setting goals are still necessary in order to implement and execute any type of advertising.

Another form of traditional media still utilized within animal welfare organizations in the United States is Radio. Radio advertising was executed weeks prior to a 4<sup>th</sup> annual upcoming gala, Rags to Wags, in which an Austin based organization hosted an event featuring the animals of their organization in a fashion show. Individual tickets for purchase were \$75, while to help sponsor the event prices started at \$250. Any sponsor that donates would have their name/company listed on the organization website. The gala included a silent auction, raffle, DJ, photographer, food, drinks, and the fashion show in which every individual had an animal dressed in some form of clothing or costume. Advertising of this gala to benefit the animals was discussed as a radio advertisement creating so much buzz that DJ’s and other radio hosts were also talking about how to purchase tickets (mentioning that it would sell out), how to donate, sponsor, etc. The buzz on the radio certainly paid off as the 2009 4<sup>th</sup> annual Rags to Wags raised nearly \$250,000.

Finally, in regards to traditional media, although the rise of social media is rapidly expanding, it had not minimized the number of print materials that nonprofit animal welfare organizations are producing, at least not yet. All organizations that I had the honor to speak with and research are still very heavy into print media. From newspapers

ads, placements in magazines, brochures on the organization itself, how to be involved and how to properly care for your animals, save the dates cards for upcoming events, etc., it is evident that most animal welfare organizations are still heavily relying on the success of traditional media.

Although the use of social media is becoming the new and biggest trend within communications and effective marketing, a day where traditional print media is extinguished does not appear to be anywhere in the near future. All organizations mentioned they continually produce certain print materials as it is the easiest form of advertising to distribute physically to the public. As print materials can be much more costly than social media, one area in which organizations have been attempting to cut back is through the use of color within some materials.

### *Fundraising Events*

Fundraising and events form the most common trend that every organization interviewed and research continually participates in. Almost every organization interviewed hosts some form of fundraising event to benefit the animals and the continual upkeep of the organization. Some fundraisers are elaborate annual galas directed towards extremely wealthy individuals and companies that have the potential to contribute to the organization through a large donation. An organization in Austin, Texas, hosts an annual gala, Petcasso, which includes animal paintings, luxurious dinner, silent and live auctions, live music and most importantly, featured paintings created by animal artists and their owners. The target for the campaign is wealthy individuals and companies.

Last year, the organization raised a total of \$170,000, of which more than 85% of the event proceeds went directly to serve animals in need. The fundraiser was a success due to continual and informative email blasts, phone calls, direct mail, social networking sites, and press releases prior to the main event.

Petcasso was the most selective and upscale event that was executed in comparison to fundraisers or events executed by other nonprofit animal welfare organizations. While most fundraisers are typically not as elaborate as Petcasso, the outcome can still be effective if properly branded. An adoption event in which all animal welfare organizations within San Antonio, Texas participate, is called Pucks and Paws 3, sponsored by AAPAW (Alamo Area Partners for Animal Welfare). The president of this organization mentioned this day-long adoption event has proven to be very successful in the past, with 100-200 animals adopted daily. Much time and effort are spent in funding, planning, and executing this event as San Antonio, Texas, currently has the largest number of animals euthanized in the U.S (<http://www.aapaw.org>); interestingly their model organizations not far away in Austin are all currently operating under a no kill environment. Throughout this event, all animal welfare programs that participate are optimistic that the branding initiatives for Pucks and Paws 3, along with many other fundraisers and events, are enough to help San Antonio become a no kill city by 2012.

While some fundraisers and events are large in which hundreds of consumers attend and thousands of dollars are donated, smaller and more simplistic opportunities are still effective. Examples of smaller fundraisers include adoption events, spay/neuter

services, benefits, educational programs, and opportunities to donate through email blasts, direct mail, and finally grassroot marketing. It is not the size of the fundraiser or event that contributes to the overall success, but rather the effectiveness of the branding initiatives taken on by the organization itself. Although some believe generating buzz about fundraisers and events can be as simple as creating a few forms of advertisement through traditional media, organizations must not forget that successful brands are a compilation of stories, images, and associations (Holt, 2002). If this is remembered before any advertising strategy goes into effect, the organization has a better chance of improving the overall success of the event through a more in depth understanding of how the brand messages are transferred into the consumers mind.

### *Grassroot Marketing*

A positive trend amongst all organizations researched involves the use of grassroot marketing. As learned from my advertising studies, grassroot marketing is an inexpensive, easy, and effective way to generate buzz. The basis of this type of marketing strategy is to utilize individuals in the spread of the organization's missions and objectives. The animal welfare organizations understand that by entering the community and spreading information about the individual missions and objectives, personal relationships can begin to form. Through these personal relationships and sharing of information, supporters and believers in the organization become more involved. To explain successful grassroot marketing in the easiest form, it acts as a ripple effect. More support leads to an increase in word of mouth, which initiates even more



supporters and believers of the organization. As Dr. Drumwright (2009) mentioned in her discussion regarding branding for social causes, she stated that it is essential to have allies to back up your cause and provide support.

Two different animal welfare organizations in Austin and San Antonio, Texas, believe there are multiple aspects to their communication goals, one of the main being grassroots marketing. They feel that entering the community and stressing education and knowledge to the younger demographic is essential to future prevention of animal abuse and neglect. The communications director mentioned that at times, specifically in this region, children have to teach their parents on certain subjects, therefore it is important to make sure these young individuals have a complete understanding of proper animal care. Through speaking to school aged children about the responsibility of pet ownership and educating them on animal welfare, it is the organization's hope that the children will be better prepared and knowledgeable to not only help others in this regard, but start a lifelong process of selflessness, love, and respect for all animals.

### *Partnerships*

Drumwright (2009) also mentioned when discussing branding for social causes, that when partnering with a for profit company, it is essential to always make sure the partner is the correct fit. This can be determined by deciding if the partner and the organization have congruence, similar values and targets, open communication, credibility through established roots, and a commitment to a long term relationship (Drumwright, 2009). In addition, the organization and company should decide if they

balance the other out through evaluating their “fits”: mission fit, management fit, evaluation fit, and resource fit (Drumwright, 2009). Partnering with a for-profit company that has the characteristics listed above, will help increase brand equity and belief in the specific organization (Drumwright, 2009).

An animal welfare organization out of Utah has shown much success with their partnerships over the years. Seven of their corporate sponsors have been a partner for over 25 years. As the 2009 material from this organization stated:

Our corporate partners provide our organization with the opportunity to reach a variety of audiences, raising awareness of our efforts toward No More Homeless Pets and generating revenue to support animal welfare education, intervention and initiatives nationwide. Our partner programs provide corporate supporters an opportunity to make a positive impact in many animals' lives, and involve employees and consumers in the cause.

This demonstrates that both parties within the partnership not only understand the other's needs and wants, but allow for open communication and support between each other. This type of continual interaction between a nonprofit and corporate sponsor allows for a basis for future success.

Another example of successful partnerships involves a rescue group in Austin, Texas. This organization has been very successful with corporate sponsors gaining attention and raising money for their rescue group. An example of corporate partnership from this rescue involves a month-long fundraising opportunity with a local coffee shop.

To inform the city of the fundraiser, information was posted on their website, flyers were placed on each table within the coffee shop and also at the register (explaining the fundraising program). When a customer would give a minimum donation of \$1 to the organization, they not only would receive a bracelet, but also 10% off their coffee purchase. To help contribute, I made a minimum donation, but the shop had run out of bracelets. When I asked an employee how many bracelets the store had started with, she mentioned 1,000. At the time I went to the shop, this partnership had only been operating for about two weeks and still had another two to go. 1,000 bracelets at a minimum donation of \$1 a piece had, in less than two weeks, contributed at least \$1,000 to the organization.

This for profit/nonprofit partnership proved to be a success for both parties. The animal rescue group raised awareness and money, while the coffee shop gained new customers that heard about the fundraising opportunity elsewhere. As author James B. Twitchell mentions in his book *Branded Nation*, it is imperative that a partnership be mutually beneficial and that each side understand the goals and expectations of the other (Twitchell, 2009). For the previous two examples, both partnerships proved to be a success.

#### *Lack of Qualified Communications Expertise*

A discouraging trend discovered in research is the need for an increase in employees within the communications field of the organizations, specifically individuals who are trained with a marketing or advertising background. The organization believes

they would successfully benefit from having an educated and trained communications, marketing, or advertising employee to be specifically in charge of social networking. Unfortunately, the need to fill this position is also low on the totem pole due to tight budgets and needs to allocate the budget to resources and other communication tools that the organization feels are more important.

A complication due to the lack of qualified communication expertise involves individuals covering responsibilities that are not within their forte or understanding. This is concerning to communication managers of these organizations as one in Austin, Texas mentioned, “I worry every day...it’s my job.” This organization mentioned that in the daily perspective and rankings of importance, keeping up with social media is usually bottom of the list. Employees in charge of social media are also in charge of other roles that require immediate attention, pushing social media down the ladder. Although all organizations would love the ability to update whenever anything new is available, it is not always accessible to execute. Utilizing a social media expertise not only removes the maintenance from other individuals not as interested or knowledgeable, but also advances the organization within the social media realm in hopes to help generate greater awareness through this medium.

### *Branding Concerns*

Almost all animal welfare organizations researched had at least one issue when it came to branding whether disclosed through a personal interview with a communications director/manager or evident from the website. Specifically, there was one organization

that seemed to have the most concerns when it came to branding. Ironically, this organization is the one that also had an experienced employee with a communications background that was in charge of everything under the communication topic. While this may seem surprising, the reason for the lack of successful branding had to do with a clash between the communications director and the owner/founder of the organization, an elderly woman who started the nonprofit almost 17 years ago out of care and concern for animals. The clash in generations is apparent when the issue of branding evolves as will be discussed in the following page.

One branding issue the organization is currently experiencing includes the issue of shortening their formal name to an abbreviation as it has 22 letters. Many consumers find it too long to continually type or speak. The communications director of this organization stated, “Everything has an abbreviation these days,” (Farr, 2009). Not only does it seem as though everything has an abbreviation these days, but the communications director felt that shortening the name to an abbreviation would be easier to say, type/write, and utilize on a day to day basis.

Although this may seem to be an easy fix, there are a few setbacks. As previously mentioned, the founder and owner of the organization is adamant that the name not be shortened. She believes that shortening the name could possibly confuse consumers already familiar with another Austin based animal welfare organization while also possibly diluting the brand by not making it as easily identifiable. Ironically, when clients of the organization refer to the organization in writing and when utilizing social

networking sites, it usually is mentioned as the abbreviated version. Although the founder is set to her convictions, on the organization's website, the complete name is written out, followed in parenthesis by the abbreviation.

Furthermore, another problem exists in the printed materials and the use of coloring in the external communication forms. While the actual logo remains the same, the location on different printed materials and colors is continually different. The colors include brown, orange, black, dark green, and lime green. The continual switching of colors within a logo does not make for a clear and consistent brand image. It is best for this organization to decide which set of colors they prefer to use, and which location they believe is most appropriate for the logo, and then to continually produce materials with that standard format. This allows for a more easily distinguished logo, ultimately leading to a more identifiable and well branded organization.

A rescue group in Austin, Texas that has previously been discussed in regards to partnerships also suffers from brand logo identity and placement. Although the rescue has a consistent logo, which is easily identifiable by the public, it is not always used with the organization's name and when used, is randomly placed sometimes even breaking up the name of the organization being placed within certain letters. The logo appears to have a "Where's Waldo" approach. There is no evident flow or rationale behind where the logo should be consistently placed, leaving consumers confused and on a searching game for the logo.

### *Lack of Storytelling*

Andy Goodman, a nationally recognized author, speaker and consultant in the field of public interest communications, believes that storytelling is a very powerful form of communication, especially for nonprofit organizations due to tight budgets. As Goodman mentioned in his speech about *Storytelling as Best Practice*, “Storytelling needs to be considered a best practice.” He continued, “If your goal is to educate, persuade, or simply connect in a meaningful way with a particular audience, storytelling is the single most powerful communications tool available to you,” (Goodman, 2006).

While storytelling is important, more importantly is *how* the story is told. As learned through my advertising studies, it is best to use both a rational and emotional appeal to gain the attention of the target audience. Whether the storytelling is used to help increase donations, adoptions, volunteers, or simply to educate, the means in which the story is expressed can make or break the effectiveness of the overall story.

A trend, and concern, that was found amongst many nonprofit animal welfare organizations was not only the lack of storytelling, but the sole use of the rational appeal to gain awareness. This is seen through organizations supplying a bountiful amount of statistics, both good and bad, and expecting to create a compelling call to action. As a communication director from a nonprofit animal welfare organization in Austin mentioned, although statistics are important and should be expressed, the use of an emotional appeal, especially when dealing with animals, is extremely beneficial. This organization has realized from past efforts in storytelling that not only is the emotional

appeal the most effective for their organization, but also the *type* of emotion expressed is even more important.

During a sit down interview with the communications director, a flyer in which a story was being told of how the city's donations helped fund an emergency surgery of an animal brought into the clinic. The image used on the flyer was of a dog undergoing surgery. Although nothing explicit was shown, feedback was given saying that consumers felt the image was "too graphic" and were not comfortable seeing images of animal undergoing surgery, even if no blood was exposed. Due to the feedback, the organization listened to its consumers and decided to only use happy and upbeat images from which a much more optimistic response from consumers was generated.

A Michigan based dog rescue and sanctuary, although behind on evolving new media, has also proven to be effective when it comes to storytelling. On a weekly basis, this organization places newspaper ads in the local paper featuring a different dog at the sanctuary. Each ad grabs attention through a catchy headline and then follows with a brief story about the featured animal. Following this brief bio, an explanation of how an individual can get involved with the organization is given along with the name, address, website, and phone number. After reading these postings, the reader has a clear understanding of what the organization does and how they operate is easily understood, in addition to gaining insight on a different featured dog of the week. Samples of successfully storytelling can be seen featured below in Figure 3 through newspaper ads (excluding the direct contact information on the bottom which was removed).



## Leo's Field of Dreams

Leo is so happy running & playing in the field at his soon-to-be new home. We have not moved yet because there is much to do to make the new place safe for the dogs. There is still lots of "fixing & fencing" to be done. Please help make Leo's dreams a reality with a tax-deductible donation so we can get the new place ready for the dogs. Your support will make Leo and his brothers & sisters so happy!



## Thank You!

"Shemp" was elected by the other Pervo puppies to say "thank you" to everyone who has sent kind words and donations to help us cover the vet bill to save Shemp, his four brothers and his sister. All of the puppies are doing well and spend their days wrestling, playing, and napping. We're still in need of donations to pay the rest of the vet bill for the nine days Shemp & his siblings spent at Wilson Vet. If you can, please send a tax-deductible donation to the address below. Your support will help us continue to care for this beautiful dog and his brothers & sister.



Figure 3 continued.

### *Goal Setting and Measurement of Success*

Setting goals for a nonprofit organization is essential for accurate measurements of success. Measuring success is one aspect of branding that most nonprofit

organizations forget to enforce (Schwartz, 2009). The easiest way to measure success is by comparing the end result numbers to the beginning numbers. An animal humane society in Austin is proud to say that their events activate adoptions, and they have quantitative proof to support this statement. In 2007, the goal number for adoptions was 1,800 cats and dogs. The actual number of adoptions ended up being 2,568. In the same year, the goal of feral cat surgeries was 1,500 and the organization achieved 1,550.

Other ways to measure success are output and outgrowth measurements (Schwartz, 2009). As Schwartz mentions, output measures gauge the amount of activity the organization performs to gain exposure for the brand, while outgrowth measures gauge how receptive, well understood, and retained the messages were by the target audience. It is essential to be able to measure both output and outgrowth of an organization to understand the complete effectiveness of a campaign (Schwartz, 2009).

Quantitative measurements are not the only means of measurement for a nonprofit organization. Author of *Good to Great and the Social Sector*, Jim Collins, expressed that thinking this way is simply a lack a discipline. Collins (2005) states there is always a way in which to measure success, first and foremost, by setting a baseline. An example of this can be seen in the following:

It doesn't really matter whether you can quantify your results. What matters is that you rigorously assemble evidence – quantitative or qualitative – to track your progress. If the evidence is primarily qualitative, think like a trial lawyer assembling the

combined body of evidence. If the evidence is primarily quantitative, then think of yourself as a laboratory scientist assembling and assessing the data (Collins, 2005, p.7).

This demonstrates that although there is not an exact standard to evaluate the effectiveness of a branding campaign, each organization should initiate criteria to help best understand the success of individual campaigns, whether through quantitative or qualitative methods.

## **DISCUSSION**

After analyzing branding initiatives through both successful and not-as-successful animal welfare organizations, and the many means in which these organizations attempt to gain awareness and communicate to the public, a better understanding of how to effectively brand a nonprofit animal welfare organization has been achieved. Previously, numerous trends and concerns amongst nonprofit animal welfare organizations across the United States were unveiled. From these trends and concerns had evolved the most important information related to successful branding. A detailed analysis of what should be executed in order to successfully brand a nonprofit animal welfare organization is listed below.

### *Specific Target Market*

Not having a target market simply because a nonprofit animal welfare organization believes that anyone and everyone who loves animals can help is not only detrimental to the organization, but also to the staff and volunteers. Because having a target is the basis of all marketing communication strategies, lack of a target can lead to lack of direction within communication efforts. Finding a specific target market is not only a necessary step to successful branding, but it simplifies the process of research. A specific and narrow target market allows for direct and straight forward research on the

selected group. Once an organization has selected an appropriate target, extensive research can be executed to find the common demographics and psychographics of this group.

Understanding the target and the forms of communication the target is most receptive to greatly facilitates successful by marketing. Through not only having a target market, but understanding the consumers that fall within this group opens opportunity to find how to best blend the mission statement into the target's daily life. By finding what it takes to make the target consumer respond, the animal welfare organizations will be able to tailor the communication messages to best catch attention and change behavior within their market.

#### *Utilize Model Organizations*

Finding other nonprofit animal welfare organization that have been successful is a useful tool for guidance when it comes to communication strategies. Learning what made the organization successful and implementing the same underlying strategies will allow a solid foundation to continue expanding communication efforts. Taking a "follow the leader" approach, as Twitchell mentions in *Branded Nation*, is an instinctive behavior in humans (Twitchell, 2005, p.80). Because of this installed herd like behavior, it is innate, and beneficial, to continually look up to current and past successful organizations to follow the footsteps of effective branding techniques.

#### *Immerse in Social Media*

Previous discussion has proven that involvement in social media and networking can be beneficial to many organizations. While this remains true, an organization should participate in such media only if strategy and regular upkeep is manageable (Askanase, 2009). Maintaining the selected forms of social networking should involve updating them with news, images, events, fundraisers, adoption services, and most importantly, a link to direct all traffic flow back to the website. This allows for a direct correspondence between the organization website on social networking sites. It is also important for these organizations to display the same tone expressed on the website as on the social networking sites. As understood from my previous advertising coursework, a cohesive, consistent, and unified message is imperative to developing a strong and memorable brand identity.

### *Traditional Media*

The use of traditional media is both beneficial and effective, but only when properly executed. The advertising must target the selected market and be well branded. In addition, research is important to fully understand the consumer and have sound strategies to deliver the greatest feedback. It is imperative that common research be conducted on the various types of traditional advertising, how they are being used within the nonprofit sector (specifically within animal welfare organizations), and which medium proves to be the most beneficial. Before implementing the advertising tactics, deciding which tone and appeal are most appropriate can make or break the effectiveness of an individual advertisement (Castle, 2009). Through the organization's research, the

tone and appeal that is most receptive to the target audience should be utilized in order to achieve the highest level of success for traditional media.

### *Consistent logo*

Contributing to the effective use of traditional media including having a consistent logo in which the colors and placement are common on all materials. Placing a well designed logo that thoroughly represents the organization through all forms of media allows a visual representation for consumers to associate with the organization or cause. An example of the effectiveness of a logo can be demonstrated through the pink ribbon now associated with breast cancer awareness, the Nike swoosh symbol, or the Target bulls eye.

### *Grassroot Marketing*

Grassroot marketing is a type of communication, as previously demonstrated, that can be very successful for nonprofit animal welfare organizations. Involvement within the local communities is beneficial in order educate consumers about the organization, its mission and goals. This can be done through education within schools for young children, hosting adoption events, traditional and social media usage, and word of mouth. Word of mouth will help generate buzz in which the information can continually be passed along to a greater number of people. In the end, the result of the grassroot marketing effort is to gain momentum and support from other individuals that are passionate about the organization's mission and objectives (Drumwright, 2009). Once individuals begin supporting the organization, one more member has been added to the



team to help spread awareness and gain even more supporters. A successful grassroots marketing effort will act as a ripple effect in which once it has started, it is hard to stop.

### *Partnerships*

Regardless of whom the partnership is with, it must be mutually beneficial to both parties. In addition, it is imperative that open communication, along with an open mind, be available between the two (Drumwright, 2009). When thinking of who best to partner with, it is in the organization's best interest to ask the following question: who can provide great value to us, and how can we provide great value to them (Drumwright 2009)? In addition to providing great value, understanding each other's goals, both short and long term, is essential to a long lasting and successful partnership (Twitchell 2004).

### *Strategy*

The trends and concerns gathered from this research all originate to one common aspect: strategy. Most nonprofit animal welfare organizations researched had overall strong missions along with great fundraising and events. What was lacking was a sound strategy guiding the process from the mission to the specific event. If these organizations can begin to implement a strategy behind the communication tactics, an overall better flowing process and branding opportunity can begin.

### *Storytelling*

Storytelling should lead the brand. As Twitchell mentions in *Branded Nation*, "Stories are not second nature to a brand, they are first," (Twitchell, 2005, p 100). The

story should be interesting, catch attention, be told in a unique way, and use a tone that is appropriate for the selected target audience (Goodman, 2006). Not only should the story be told, but more importantly, the story should be told in a way that educates, persuades, and can connect with the specific market (Goodman 2006). Through effective storytelling, an organization can create an ambiance for the brand that becomes easily memorable and recognizable to target consumers.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research conducted within this report has provided insights regarding effective branding for a nonprofit animal welfare organization. While the information presented would be most effective for those organizations that have yet to evolve, currently operating organizations can also benefit from this information, although some may need to conduct a rebranding initiative. For the startup organizations, a basic guideline and foundation has been established to not only help successfully understand the importance of branding, but also how to best establish the most effective branding opportunity for the organization itself.

Through understanding the branding initiatives, benefits, and goals, it is possible to achieve the highest level of success for any nonprofit animal welfare organization, whether an organization that has yet to be established or one that has been around for

many years. Taking a step back and looking at the effectiveness of the organization through its branding tactics is beneficial for the organization itself and the consumers through which the branding is directed. I hope that this research report has given a better understanding of branding and the important role it plays in the nonprofit animal welfare organization sector. Now, and in the future, I believe that through the reading, analyzing, and implementation of the strategies mentioned in this report, nonprofit animal welfare organizations can successfully launch, operate, and succeed.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Protocol/interview questions for nonprofit animal shelters communication division**

- 1.) What was your main objective for your organization when first starting (only start-up)?
  - a. Was this goal accomplished? Why or why not?
- 2.) What is your current mission?
  - a.) Is this different from when you started/first opened the shelter?
  - b.) Do you believe this is different from other shelters? If yes, how so?
- 3.) What are your communication goals/objectives for your shelter/rescue?

- 4.) While trying to reach these goals, what major challenges/problems in communication have you been confronted with?
- 5.) What forms of communications have you previously used and are currently using for your shelter?
- a. What do you consider your *most* effective campaign? Why?
  - b. What do you consider your *least* effective campaign? Why?
  - c. How did you measure the effectiveness of these campaigns?
- 2.) Do you feel that your communication mission is more organizational marketing or social marketing? Please explain.
- 3.) Who is your target audience for your communication efforts?
- a.) Any specific demographics or psychographics?
  - b.) What about this segment led you to believe it would be the most receptive to your advertising/communications?
  - c.) Were there any surprises you came across when selecting the most appropriate target?
- 4.) What type of message are you displaying to best reach your target/what is your focus?
- a. Adoption?
  - b. Donations?
  - c. No kill?

- d. Education?
  - e. All of the above?
- 5.) Have you looked up to any other existing and successful nonprofit shelters for guidance while developing your organization?
- a.) If so, which organizations and in what way?
  - b.) If not, what made you believe your organization would be successful in its communication tactics and social marketing strategies?
- 6.) What are your main concerns regarding the communication strategies of your non-profit animal shelter?
- a.) How do you plan to tackle these concerns?
  - b.) What would you do to better your organizations communication tactics?
- 7.) Which form/medium of advertising communication have you found to be the most effective for your organization and why?
- a.) Which tone in the advertisements attracted the most attention?
    - 1.) Did the same tone encourage participation or was it a different tone that transferred the attention into action?
    - 2.) What type of responses/feedback did you have from this campaign?
- 8.) What are your future plans for your organization?
- 9.) Is there anything I should I have asked you that I haven't?

10.) Is your organization involved in social media/networking?

a.) If yes, how so?

b.) If no, why not?

Thank you for your time!

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## **VITA**

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